

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 0686

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT

SUBJ: ANTI-FREI CAMPAIGN

REFS: A) 75 SANTIAGO 8549, B) SANTIAGO 0469, C) SANTIAGO 0584

1. SUMMARY: GOC HAS NOW INITIATED A SPECIFICALLY ANTI-FREI CAMPAIGN. ATTEMPT IS MADE TO LABEL FREI AS UNPATRIOTIC, AND PERHAPS TRAITOROUS, FOR WRITING CRITICISM THAT IS USED BY GOC ENEMIES AS PART OF BROADER ATTACK AGAINST GOC AND PEOPLE OF CHILE. GOVERNMENT HAS ALLOWED FREI'S DOCUMENT TO BE PRIVATELY DISTRIBUTED IN CHILE, AS POCKET BOOK AND GOVERNMENT PAPER HAS PUBLISHED TEXT. STRATEGY MAY BE SUCCESSFUL IN PERSUADING MANY CHILEANS THAT FREI HAS ACTED AGAINST INTERESTS OF COUNTRY, THUS JUSTIFYING WHATEVER GOC MEASURES MIGHT BE TAKEN AGAINST HIM. ON OTHER HAND, PUBLICITY PROVES TO CHILEANS THAT FREI AND PDC REMAIN ON SCENE AS PROPONENTS OF A POSSIBLE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE TO PRESENT GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. SECOND STEP OF CAMPAIGN AGAINST PDC (REF C) IS NOW UNDERWAY WITH GOC CAMPAIGN DIRECTED SPECIFICALLY AGAINST EX-PRESIDENT EDUARDO FREI, WHO RECENTLY WROTE PAMPHLET STRONGLY CRITICAL OF CURRENT GOVERNMENT (REF A). LOOSELY VEILED ATTACK AGAINST FREI OPENED WITH PINOCHET'S ALLUSION TO CHILEAN "KERENSKY" IN JANUARY 21 SPEECH.

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3. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY OBVIOUSLY WELL PLANNED SERIES OF

EVENTS WHICH BEGAN WITH GOC JANUARY 23 DECISION TO ALLOW FREI CRITICISM TO BE PUBLISHED. (PDC TELLS US THAT SOME 7000-9000 COPIES HAVE ALREADY BEEN DISTRIBUTED. GOC AUTHORIZED ON DISTRIBUTION, NOT SALE.) DECISION WAS AN ACT OF COURTESY TO AN EX-PRESIDENT, BUT A BARB IN THE ANNOUNCEMENT INDICATED THAT MAGNANIMITY WAS NOT THE MOTIVE. FOLLOWING DAY, GOC'S "EL CRONISTA" CARRIED THREE-PAGE COVERAGE OF REACTION TO FREI DOCUMENT UNDER HEADLINE, "FREI BROUGHT INTO HEART OF ANTI-CHILEAN CAMPAIGN." COVERAGE FOCUSED ON RADIO MOSCOW APPROVAL OF FREI DOCUMENT, AND REPRINTED EXCERPTS FROM FOREIGN PRESS ANTI-GOC STATEMENTS WHICH DRAWS ON IT.

4. JANUARY 2" "EL CRONISTA" THEN PRINTED ENTIRE FREI DOCUMENT: JANUARY 26 IT GAVE IT TWO-PAGE COVERAGE, WITH ANTI-FREI EDITORIAL, MORE FOREIGN PRESS CRITICISM OF GOC, AND FURTHER ARTICLE ON RADIO MOSCOW'S SUPPORT.

5. OTHER PAPERS HAVE CARRIED COMMENTARY ON DOCUMENT AND/OR QUOTATIONS FROM TEXT. BOTH "EL MERCURIO" AND SENSATIONALIST PRO-GOC "LA SEGUNDA" JANUARY 23 CARRIED "NY TIMES" EDITORIAL SUPPORTING FREI, AND MUCH HAS BEEN MADE OF "TIMES" COMMENTATOR ANTONY LEWIS' PIECE CITING FREI'S CRITICISM AS ONE REASON FOR TURNING DOWN WORLD BANK \$33 MILLION LOAN. "LA SEGUNDA" HAD BEEN FIRST TO SAY THAT GOC WOULD ALLOW PUBLICATION OF DOCUMENT; IT ADDED THAT THIS WOULD DEMONSTRATE FREEDOM OF PRESS IN CHILE.

6. COMMENT: AS CURRENT STRATEGY UNFOLDS, IT APPEARS THAT GOC IS ATTEMPTING TO PICTURE FREI AS UNPATRIOTIC, PERHAPS A VIRTUAL TRAITOR, SINCE HIS CRITICAL COMMENT HAS BEEN SEIZED UPON FOR USE IN WORLD-WIDE ANTI-GOC CAMPAIGN. STAGE COULD BE SET FOR SOME SORT OF REPRISAL AGAINST FREI, SHOULD PUBLIC REACTION STIMULATED BY GOVERNMENT MAKE IT WORTH WHILE FOR JUNTA. AT SAME TIME, BY ALLOWING PUBLICATION OF DOCUMENT THAT HAD ALREADY BEEN WIDELY DISTRIBUTED, GOC CAN MAINTAIN THAT FREEDOM OF PRESS EXISTS IN CHILE. IN ONGOING DISCUSSION, GOVERNMENT HAS MANY ADVANTAGES: IT CAN PRESS ITS ATTACK ON FREI AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATES, WHILE LATTER HAVE ONLY LIMITED CAPACITY TO REPLY PUBLICLY.

7. THE WEAPON IS DOUBLE EDGED, HOWEVER: IT GIVES PDC
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AND FREI NEEDED PUBLIC EXPOSURE WHEN THEIR ISOLATION WAS BEGINNING TO JELL; IT REMINDS PEOPLE THAT THERE IS A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRESENT JUNTA; AND IT DEMONSTRATES FREI'S

ACTIVE LEADERSHIP. WE FIND IT SIGNIFICANT THAT NOT ONLY CENTER BUT LEFT-WING ELEMENTS ABROAD HAVE SUPPORTED FREI'S POSITION.

8. WHILE FREI HAS TIMED HIS PUBLIC CRITICISM VERY SHREWDLY, WE DO NOT SHARE THE VIEW -- EXPRESSED IN SOME QUARTERS ABROAD -- THAT HIS BLAST WILL IN ITSELF PRODUCE A DECISIVE CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL SCENE. THERE IS NO SIGN HERE OF ANY WEAKENING IN THE JUNTA'S CONTROL STRUCTURE, FOREIGN SPECULATION TO THE CONTRARY NOTWITHSTANDING. WHAT IS TRUE, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE APPEARANCE OF FREI'S TRACT ADDS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT TO THE INCREASING DIFFICULTIES ALREADY CONFRONTING THE REGIME.
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